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A SERMON

Preached before the HONOURABLE

House of Commons,

AT

St. *Margaret's Westminster*,

January 30th. $169\frac{8}{9}$.

By *OFSPRING BLACKALL*, Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

LONDON,

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Mr. *BLACKALL's*

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January 30th. 1698.

Martis 31 *die Januarij*, 1698.

Ordered,

THat the Thanks of the Houſe be given to Mr. *Blackall*, for the Sermon by him Preached before them Yeſterday, at St. *Margaret's Weſtminſter*, and that he be Deſired to Print the ſame; And that Mr. *Hare*, Mr. *Hammond* and Mr. *Perry* do Acquaint him therewith.

Paul Jodrell,
Cl' Dom' Com'.

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Card
5175

St. JOHN ix. 3.

Jeſus anſwered, Neither hath this Man ſinned nor his Parents; but that the Works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him.

THE Occaſion of theſe Words may be ſeen in the foregoing Verſes: *As Jeſus paſſed by, he ſaw a Man which was blind from his Birth; And his Diſciples asked him, ſaying, Maſter, who did ſin, this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind? Jeſus anſwered, Neither hath,* &c.

For the right Underſtanding of which Anſwer of our Saviour's, we muſt firſt inquire into the Ground and Meaning of the Diſciples Queſtion; *Maſter, who did ſin, this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind?*

And the Ground and Reaſon of their Queſtion ſeems to be an Opinion which they had entertained, That the good and evil Things of this Life were, by the Divine Providence, always proportioned to Men according to their different Deſerts; And particularly, that whenever God ſent upon any Man any ſore and extraordinary Affliction, ſome great Offence or extraordinary Provocation was always the Reaſon of it.

And this indeed is an Opinion that is too generally received in the World, and is the Occaſion of thoſe raſh and uncharitable Cenſures, which People are too

apt to paſs upon others, from the Conſideration of the evil Things which they ſee do befall them in this Life.

They can hardly forbear thinking that Man, a great Sinner, whom they ſee very ſorely afflicted, altho' they themſelves know nothing that he has done amiſs; nor perhaps ever heard any thing ill of him: But the Judgment of God, they preſume, is right; and they take it for granted, that he would not have inflicted ſuch Puniſhment upon any Man, if he had not well deſerved it.

So the Inhabitants of the Iſland on which St. *Paul* was Shipwrack'd, argued with reſpect to him, when a Viper out of the Fire had faſtned on him; *Acts* 28. 4. *When the Barbarians ſaw the venomous Beaſt hang on his Hand, they ſaid among themſelves, no doubt this Man is a Murderer, whom, tho' he hath eſcaped the Sea, yet Vengeance ſuffereth not to live.*

And thus alſo the Diſciples ſeem to have thought, *viz.* That ſuch a great Calamity as Blindneſs, would not have been ſent upon any Man, but for ſome very great Fault; tho' what the Fault was, or where the Fault lay, they could not gueſs.

Had the Man been ſuddenly ſtruck with Blindneſs, they would have made no doubt but that it was a Judgment of God upon him, for ſome great Crime that he himſelf had committed; altho' they had not been able to name the particular.

But his Caſe was extraordinary, for he was born Blind; ſo that the Calamity was ſent upon him before he could have done any Thing to deſerve it; And ſo what Account to give of this, they could not tell.

But

But they ſeem to have heard of the Opinion of the *Pythagoreans* (which was embraced alſo by ſome among the *Jews*) who held that there is a Tranſmigration of Souls from one Body to another; ſo that, conſequently, every Man that is born into the World, had a Pre-exiſtence in ſome former State. And if this Opinion were true, they could not tell, but that this Man's Blindneſs from his Birth, might be a Puniſhment ſent upon him by God, for his Miſbehaviour in that former State which he was in. *Grat. in Loc.*

Or if not ſo; yet they remembred, that it was threatned in their own Law, that God would ſometimes viſit the Sins of the Fathers upon their Children. And ſo they could not tell but that this Blindneſs of the Child was deſigned as a Puniſhment to his wicked Parents, and that the Sin of the Father or Mother was, hereby, viſited on their Son.

One or t'other of theſe, they took for granted, was the Cauſe of this Man's Blindneſs; *viz.* either that it was a Judgment of God upon him for the Wickedneſs of his Parents; or elſe, for ſome great Crime committed by himſelf, in ſome State that his Soul had formerly been in, before it was united to this Body: And therefore they came to our Saviour to be reſolved which of them it was. *Maſter*, ſay they, *Who did ſin, this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind?*

In Anſwer to which Queſtion, our Saviour, wiſely avoiding to ſatisfie their Curioſity in a Point that it was needleſs for them to know; *viz.* Whether the Soul has any Exiſtence, or is capable of contracting any Guilt, before it comes into the Body; tells them that they had miſ-ſtated the Caſe; that the Queſtion ſhould

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not have been, Whether this Man's Blindneſs was a Judgment or Puniſhment inflicted on him, for his own, or for his Parents Sin; But whether it was at all deſigned for a Puniſhment of Sin; Or, whether it was inflicted for ſome other Cauſe? for that the temporal Evils that befall Men, are not always for Puniſhment, but are ſometimes deſigned for quite other Purpoſes; And that this laſt was the Caſe of the Man they had asked about. *Jeſus anſwered, neither hath this Man ſinned nor his Parents*; that is, it is not any extraordinary Wickedneſs, either in this Man, or his Parents, that was the Reaſon of his Blindneſs; *but* it was, *that the Works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him.*

The meaning of which laſt Clauſe, as ſpoken with a particular reſpect to the Blind Man, I take to be this; That he was therefore born blind, to give Occaſion to our Saviour to exert and manifeſt his Power, in the miraculous Cure of ſuch a Defect, or Imperfection in the Body of this Man, as by any natural Means or Remedies that could be uſed, was altogether incurable; and thereby to give an undeniable Proof, that he was indued with a divine Power, and conſequently that he was the *Meſſiah*. He was therefore born blind, that the Power of our Saviour ſhould be manifeſted in him.

But as the Words may be generally underſtood, and applied to any other Caſe of the like Nature, the Meaning is this; That when any temporal Evil or Affliction befalls any Man, which is not deſigned for a Puniſhment of his Sin, and to make him an Example of the divine Vengeance: it is not however by any Overſight or Careleſneſs of Providence that he

he is ſo afflicted; But that there is always ſome other good and wiſe End of Providence deſigned to be ſerved by it. *Neither hath this Man ſinned, nor his Parents*; that is, they have not either of them ſo ſinned, as that he ſhould be born blind, for a Puniſhment of his own or their Sin; *but* he was therefore born blind, *that the Works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him.*

From the Words thus explained, I ſhall take Occaſion, very briefly, to do theſe two Things.

I. To ſhew that the temporal Evils which befall Men, are not always inflicted upon them as Puniſhments for Sin.

II. To ſhew what other wiſe Ends of Providence, the temporal Evils and Afflictions that befall good Men, do ſerve for.

I. I ſhall ſhew that the temporal Evils which befall Men, are not always inflicted upon them as Puniſhments for Sin. *Neither hath this Man ſinned, nor his Parents*, that he ſhould be born blind; ſays our Saviour.

And what was true in his Caſe, is undoubtedly true in a great many others; And the Holy Scripture it ſelf furniſhes us with ſeveral Examples of this kind. But that of *Job* being one of the moſt remarkable ones, I ſhall at preſent inſtance only in that.

Where, firſt of all, we may take notice of the Character that is given of him, by the Holy Spirit of God; *Job* 1. 1. *That Man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eſchewed Evil.* So far was he from being a greater Sinner than others, that, on the contrary, there was none upon Earth, at that time,

time, ſo good as he. *Haſt thou*, ſays God himſelf, *conſidered my Servant* Job, *that there is none like him in the Earth?* Job 1. 8. Certainly then, if any Man could even merit to be exempted, even from the common Miſeries and Calamities of Humane Life, it was he. And yet it pleaſed God, to order it quite otherwiſe; And in him that Obſervation of the Wiſe Man was ſtrictly verified, *That there be Juſt Men,* Eccleſ. 8. 14. *unto whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked.*

For, if in the next place, we take notice of the Afflictions which befell this good Man; I believe we may truly ſay, that there is no Example of any, the greateſt Sinner that ever lived, that was ſo hardly dealt by, as he was.

Sometimes, indeed, a mighty Oppreſſor is forced to diſgorge his ill gotten Wealth, and is on a ſudden, from the greateſt Plenty, reduced to the moſt Miſerable Want. Sometimes, again, a notorious Sinner, who eſcapes in his own Perſon, is puniſhed very ſeverely in his Children; and has his Puniſhment multiplied, by enduring, in the Miſery of every one of them, whom he loves as himſelf, as much Pain and Torment, as he would do, if the Calamity that befell them had befallen himſelf. And again, The Puniſhments that are inflicted upon Men in this Life, by the divine Providence, are commonly ſingle, either miſerable Want and Poverty, or ſome painful Sickneſs, or noiſom Diſeaſe, or perhaps a violent or untimely Death. And when any of theſe Evils befalls any Man, we can ſcarcely forbear crying out, A Judgment! A Judgment! Surely this Man was a great Sinner, or elſe he would not have been ſo afflicted!

What

What then ſhould we have thought of a Man, in whom all theſe Miſeries and Afflictions were united, as they were in *Job*? *Who was*, one Day, *the greateſt of all the Men of the Eaſt, having ſeven thouſand Sheep, and three thouſand Camels, and five hundred Yoke of Oxen, and five hundred ſhe Aſſes, and a very great Houſe-hold*; and the next day was bereft of all his Subſtance, and left as *naked as he came out of his Mothers Womb*; who was, one Day, bleſſed with ten hopeful Children, who were very obedient to their Father, and very loving to one another; and the next Day, was deprived of them all at once, and that too, by a violent Death, by the Fall of an Houſe upon their Heads. And it added not a little to the Greatneſs of theſe Afflictions, that they came all upon him ſuddenly, when no ſuch Evils were foreſeen, or could reaſonably be feared; and that they happened all at the ſame time, the Meſſenger of one ill piece of News, having ſcarcely told his Tale, before he was ſucceded by another, the Meſſenger of a worſe.

Job 1. 3.

Job 1. 21.

Job 1, 2, 4, 5.

Job 1. 19.

Job 1. 16, 17, 18.

But hitherto he had ſuffered only in his Eſtate, and in his Children; but it was not long before he was brought to ſuffer likewiſe in his own Perſon; and that too in the worſt Manner that the Devil himſelf could deviſe; in ſuch a Manner, as perhaps no other Man either before or ſince hath ever ſuffered; being *ſmitten* all over *with ſore Boyls, from the ſole of his Foot unto his Crown*, ſo that he had not one ſound Part in his whole Body.

Job 2. 6.

Job 2. 6, 7.

And who would not have thought this Evil, eſpecially when added to all the others aforementioned, a ſufficient indication of God's high Diſpleaſure againſt him? Who that had ſeen ſuch a miſerable Object, as he

he then was, would not have concluded, as his Friends then did, that all theſe Calamities were certain Expreſſions and ſure Tokens of God's ſevereſt Vengeance upon him, for ſome great and crying ſins, well known to God, although concealed from the World?

Job 4. 7. &c. 8. 3, 4. 11. 6.

'Tis true indeed, all this while his own Life was ſpared; the Devil had no Permiſſion from God to touch that; and he was not, as ſome notorious Sinners ſometimes are, taken off by an untimely Death. But his Affliction was not the leſs, but much the greater for this; for though an untimely Death, to ſuch as live in Eaſe, and Plenty, and Proſperity, and Sin, may be juſtly reckoned a Misfortune; yet moſt certainly, to ſuch as are good Men, and yet are in extreme Want or Pain or Miſery, it is a great Happineſs to be delivered out of their ſad and wretched ſtate, tho' it be by Death. And ſo this good Man thought it would have been to him, and therefore, as patient as he was, could not forbear curſing the Day wherein he was born to endure ſuch Miſery, and heartily wiſhing for Death to put an End to it; *Wherefore*, ſaies he, *is Light given to him that is in Miſery, and Life unto the bitter in Soul? Which long for Death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid Treaſures? Which rejoyce exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the Grave?* Job 3. 20, 21, 22.

Job 2. 6.

Job 3. 2. &c.

Thus you ſee, that all thoſe Miſeries and Calamities of Life, which when they ſingly befal Men, are ſometimes Acts and Expreſſions of the divine Vengeance upon them, for ſome great and crying Sins, did all together befall this good Man; of whom yet, in the midſt of his Calamity, God himſelf gives this excellent

excellent Character, *Job* 2. 3. *And the Lord ſaid unto Satan, haſt thou conſidered my Servant Job, that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright Man, one that feareth God and eſcheweth Evil? And ſtill he holdeth faſt his Integrity, altho' thou moveſt me againſt him, to deſtroy him without a Cauſe.*

And this one Example alone, is, I think, a ſufficient Proof of the firſt Point I was to ſpeak to; which was to ſhow that the temporal Evils which befall Men, are not always inflicted upon them as Puniſhments for Sin.

But the Day we are here met together upon, may likewiſe furniſh us with another great Example of it, in our late gracious Soveraign King CHARLES I. And we ſhould be injurious to his Memory, if we ſhould not, now at this time, briefly reflect thereupon. Of whom we may ſay, as was ſaid of *Job*, That *he was a perfect and upright Man, One that feared God and eſchewed Evil*; for even his greateſt Enemies, his wicked Murtherers, could not charge him with any Vice or Immorality; or even with any Frailty or Infirmity, but ſuch as might be conſiſtent with Integrity of Heart and Mind; And of whom, if we conſider him as a King, we may, I think, truly ſay, (for what Profit can there be in flattering the Dead? eſpecially One, whom a great many now adays make it their Buſineſs; and, I ſuppoſe, hope to find their Intereſt in it, to blacken and defame?) as was ſaid of good King *Joſiah*; *Like unto him, was there no King before him:* May there, after him, ariſe many like him. 2 Kings 23. 25.

A King, that could not by the ſoftneſs of his Education, nor by the Eaſe and Plenty of a Court,

nor by the many bad Examples that were ever before his Eyes, of thoſe who had greater Reſtraints upon them than he had, be tempted to any Luxury, or Exceſs, or Extravagance in his way of Living.

A King, whom the Pleaſures of Senſe (of which he had, or might have had as great a ſhare as any) could not make in love with Pleaſure, or fond of this World; and whom the Multitude of Cares and Buſineſs that attend a Crown could not make to neglect, or omit his conſtant Exerciſe of Devotion.

A King, that naturally cared for his Subjects, and pitied them as a Father does his Children; that readily condeſcended to any thing that he thought was for their Good; and would have granted more than he did to them, if he could have done it, without betraying the Rights of the Crown, wherewith he was intruſted; and (which he valued more,) the Intereſt of Religion; And indeed rather than do either of theſe, he was contented to loſe, not only his Crown from off his Head, but his Head too.

Such was the Saint of the Day, whoſe Memory we now celebrate, and whoſe Death we lament. A Sinner indeed we can't deny him to be, in the ſame Senſe in which the Scripture ſays, that all Men are Sinners; and that *there is not a Juſt Man upon Earth, that doth Good, and ſinneth not*; But excepting only the Weakneſſes of Humane Nature, and ſuch ſlips and infirmities as the beſt Men are liable to; we may truly ſay of him, as was likewiſe ſaid of *Joſiah*, that *He did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord,—— and turned not aſide to the right Hand, or to the left.*

Rom. 3. 23.

Eccleſ. 7. 20.

2 Kings 22. 2.

And

And yet to this juſt Man it happened according to the Work of the Wicked; or rather, much worſe. For tho' there have been many cruel Tyrants, and bloody Perſecutors, and Monſters of Wickedneſs, which have been made Examples to the World of the divine Vengeance; yet hardly hath it happened even to the worſt of them, ſo ill, as it did to this, the beſt of Kings, and the beſt of Men.

They have indeed, ſome of them, been overpowered by ſome neighbouring Prince, diſplaced from their Government, and driven into Exile; And they have, others of them, been riſen up againſt by their own oppreſſed Subjects, and either ſlain in Battel, or elſe, being overcome, they have been depoſed from their Kingly Power, ſhut up in Priſon, and ſecretly Murthered; the juſt and wiſe Providence of God ſo permitting it to be: But in all Hiſtory, I believe there is no Example parallel to this in every Reſpect, ſcarcely any like it; That a Soveraign King, even while he was owned a King, ſhould have an Army of his Subjects, levied in his Name, and, as 'twas pretended, by his Authority, againſt his Perſon; That they that endeavoured to depoſe and kill him, ſhould yet give out that they were fighting for him; And that, when they had got him into their Power, they ſhould ſet up a Court of Judicature upon him, compoſed out of his own Subjects, who had ſworn Allegiance to him; That there, they ſhould formally Arraign and Try him againſt whom only Treaſon could be committed, for the Crime of High Treaſon; And that at laſt they ſhould proceed ſo far in their Hypocritical Impiety, as to paſs Sentence of Death on him, from whom only the

Judges of Life and Death could legally derive their Power; and to Execute, as a Villainous Malefactor, the Father of their Countrey, their rightful Lord and Soveraign.

The Evils that he ſuffered, conſidered in themſelves, were as great as could well be endured; but the Manner in which they were inflicted, and the Perſons from whom he ſuffered them, were highly aggravating Ingredients in his Affliction; ſo that all things conſidered, perhaps no Man (our Lord and Saviour only excepted) did ever ſuffer more.

And now from theſe two great and notable Examples, I hope, we are ſufficiently convinced, that the temporal Afflictions which befall Men, are not always certain Tokens of God's Diſpleaſure; nor always deſigned for the Puniſhment of their Sin, upon whom they are ſent.

And what we ſhould learn from the Conſideration of this Point, is, To beware how we paſs a Judgment upon any Man, from what befalls him in this Life; Becauſe ſuch Judgment, if it be not falſe, is, at the beſt, raſh and uncertain; and *we cannot*, as the Wiſe Man ſays, *know Love or Hatred by all that is before us; for all things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.* And tho' nothing comes to paſs by Chance; and no Evil of any kind, ever befalls any Man, but by the Deſignation of the divine Providence; yet the very ſame Event, which to one Man is an Expreſſion of God's Anger, to another Man may be an Inſtance and Token of his Kindneſs; and therefore, when we cannot certainly tell which it is, Charity obliges us to believe the beſt.

Eccleſ. 9. 1, 2.

And

And this leads me to the Second thing propounded; which was,

II. To ſhew what other wiſe Ends of Providence are ſerved by the temporal Evils and Afflictions which befall Men. *Neither hath this Man ſinned, nor his Parents*, that he was born blind, *but that the Works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him.*

And what was ſaid of this Man's Blindneſs is as true of any other worldly Evil that at any time befalls any Man; If it be not intended for Puniſhment (as it is not always) there are ſome other Works of God that may be manifeſted thereby: ſome other wiſe Ends of Providence that 'tis deſigned for.

But in diſcourſing on this Head, it would be great Preſumption to pretend to mention all the Ends of Providence, in any of its Diſpenſations; ſeeing *the Righteouſneſs of God is like the great Mountains, and his Judgments are a great Deep, and his Ways paſt finding out.* Pſal. 36. 6. Rom. 11. 33. Nevertheleſs there are two Ends of Providence, which are general; and which, I believe, we may ſay, are always deſigned in all the Afflictions of good Men, beſides others which may be ſpecial and peculiar to ſome Caſes, or which we may not have Wiſdom enough to diſcern; *viz.* 1. The ſpiritual Improvement of the Perſons afflicted, whereby they will be intitled to a greater Reward in Heaven: And, 2. The Benefit of others, who beholding their good Example, may be thereby both directed and encouraged in the Practice of thoſe Vertues which are proper to an afflicted State.

1. One

1. One End of Providence, in ſending Afflictions upon good Men, is for their ſpiritual Improvement in Grace and Vertue, whereby they will be intitled to a greater Reward in the other World. For there is no Man ſo good, but he may be made better, and there is no one State of Life, in which there is Opportunity of exerciſing all Vertues; And therefore tho' a Man be as perfect as any Man can be, in that State wherein he now is; yet if he be called to another State, and hath Trial made of him another Way, he may, and if he acquits himſelf well, he will thereby be rendred more perfect.

And accordingly, 'tis obſerved by the Apoſtle, *Heb.*2.10.that even our Bleſſed Lord and Saviour himſelf *was made perfect through Sufferings*; and *Heb.*5.8. that *though he were a Son, yet he learned Obedience by the Things which he ſuffered:* And that this ſame is the Deſign of God in the Chaſtiſement and Correction of all his Sons, we are told by the ſame Apoſtle, *Heb.* 12. 10, 11. *He chaſteneth us for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holineſs.* And *though no Chaſtning for the preſent, ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs afterward it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteouſneſs unto them which are exerciſed thereby.*

And upon this Account the Holy Pſalmiſt thankfully acknowledges the Kindneſs of God, in laying Afflictions upon him, *Pſal.* 119. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy Statutes.* And the Apoſtle exhorts us, *to count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations; knowing this, that the Trying of our Faith worketh Patience; And let Patience,* ſays he, *have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing.* So

Jam. 1. 2,3,4.

So that to what was ſaid before, that temporal Adverſities and Afflictions are not always Marks of God's Diſpleaſure, we may now add this; that when they befall good Men, they are Tokens and Expreſſions of his Kindneſs. He means thereby to make them more perfect in Holineſs, that ſo they may be capable of a more perfect Happineſs; *theſe light Afflictions which are but for a Moment, working for them a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory:* as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 4. 17. For the more they are tried, the more they will be refined and purified. And the greater Difficulties they are put to encounter, being enabled by the divine Grace to conquer them, their Victory will be ſo much the greater, when they overcome; and their Crown will be ſo much the more glorious.

And therefore our Saviour pronounces a Bleſſedneſs to ſuch as are reviled and perſecuted; and commands his Diſciples rather to rejoyce, than to be caſt down, when ſuch things happen to them, *Mat.* 5. 10, 11, 12. *Bleſſed are they which are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Bleſſed are ye when Men ſhall revile you and perſecute you--- Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.*

And that this was one End and Deſign of Providence in the Afflictions of our late martyred Soveraign King CHARLES the Firſt, cannot be doubted by thoſe who reflect upon his Carriage and Deportment under his Afflictions.

An excellent Man, indeed, he was before; But nevertheleſs we may truly affirm, that he was much improved and bettered by his Sufferings. And of his

Profiting

Profiting under them, all they were Witneſſes (not only his Servants, his Chaplains, his Friends; but even his Enemies) who attended him in his Reſtraints, and have given Teſtimony to the World of his Piety and Meekneſs and Patience and Charity. And that excellent Book * compoſed by himſelf, in the time of his Diſtreſſes, will, I ſuppoſe, be an everlaſting Evidence thereof to after Ages, notwithſtanding the Endeavours that have been formerly uſed by ſome to prove it ſpurious; and the Confidence of a late Author aſſerting it to be ſo, without either producing any new Evidence for the Proof of his Aſſertion; or offering one Word in Anſwer to thoſe juſt and rational Exceptions that had been made before to thoſe only Teſtimonies which he inſiſts upon, to prove it a Forgery; or making any Exceptions to thoſe later Evidences that have been produced to prove it Authentick.

* Εἰκὼν Βασιλικὴ, or, *The Portraiture of His Sacred Majeſty in his Solitudes and Sufferings.*

Life of John Milton, *Printed* 1699.

Vindication of K. Charles *the Martyr*, &c. 2*d* Edition, with Additions, 1697.

But (to uſe his own Phraſe) *We may ceaſe to wonder* that He ſhould have the Boldneſs, without Proof, and againſt Proof, to deny the Authority of this Book, who is ſuch an Infidel as to doubt, and is Shameleſs and impudent enough, even in Print, and in a Chriſtian Countrey, publickly to affront our Holy Religion, by declaring his Doubt, *That ſeveral Pieces under the Name of Chriſt and his Apoſtles*, he muſt mean thoſe now received by the whole Chriſtian Church, for I know of no other, *are ſuppoſititious; altho' through the Remoteneſs of thoſe Ages, the Death of the Perſons concerned, and the Decay of other Monuments which might give us true Information, the Spuriouſneſs thereof is yet undiſcovered.*

Life of J. Milton, *p.* 91, 92.

And

And 'tis much to be feared that all your pious Deſigns and Endeavours to ſuppreſs Vice and Immorality (for which, if they ſucceed according to the Hopes of all good Men, you will highly deſerve the Bleſſing, not only of the preſent Age, but of all Poſterity too, which will inherit a Bleſſing by your Means; 'tis, I ſay, much to be feared, that theſe your pious Deſigns and Endeavours) will not have altogether ſo good an Effect as might be wiſhed; ſo long as the Foundation of all Revealed Religion is ſo openly ſtruck at, and the publick Records and Evidences of our Chriſtianity, are, without Controul or Cenſure, ſuffered to be called in Queſtion; For if any of the *Pieces* (as he calls them) *under the Name of Chriſt and his Apoſtles*, which are received by the whole Chriſtian Church, as Portions of divine Revelation, *are ſpurious and ſuppoſititious*, who can tell but that thoſe which forbid Swearing and Drunkenneſs, and Fornication, and Adultery, and other abominable Luſts not fit to be named, are ſo, as well as thoſe (which I ſuppoſe this Author chiefly aims at) which deliver to us the Doctrine of the Trinity, and other Articles of our Chriſtian Faith? And therefore ſeeing the heavenly Doctrines, and the pure and perfect Precepts of Chriſtianity are both *built upon the ſame Foundation of the Prophets and Apoſtles, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief Corner Stone*; if this Foundation be peck'd at and undermined, and ſo weakened, that one Part of the Building falls to the Ground, I doubt it will be impoſſible, by any Art, to uphold the other.---

But to return to my Subject---

2. Another End of God's Providence in ſending Afflictions upon good Men, is for the Benefit of

others; who beholding their good Example, may be thereby both directed and encouraged in the Practice of thoſe Vertues which are proper to an afflicted State.

This was probably the Reaſon of *Job*'s Afflictions; This moſt certainly was one Reaſon why the Hiſtory thereof, and of his Behaviour under them is recorded in the Holy Scripture; that by his Example others might be incited to the like Patience and Submiſſion to the divine Will, under all the Adverſities of this Life.

Nay this was, in part, the Deſign even of our Saviour's Sufferings, as we are told by St. *Peter*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 21. *Chriſt alſo ſuffered for you, leaving you an Example, that ye ſhould follow his Steps.*

And therefore, this alſo, we may reaſonably think, was one End and Deſign of Providence, in the Afflictions of our late martyred Soveraign, whoſe Memory we this Day celebrate.

For to excite Men to the Practice of difficult Vertues, there is need, not only of Precept to direct, and of Promiſe to ſtir up their Endeavours; but likewiſe of Example; to ſhow them that the Duties commanded them are not impracticable; and thereby to encourage them to do their utmoſt, in an Aſſurance that their Labour ſhall not be in vain.

And the Example of Kings and great Perſons being generally the moſt taken Notice of; and alſo, upon other Accounts more influential than the Examples of meaner Men; it was agreeable to the Goodneſs of God, and the Wiſdom of Providence, to chuſe him out for this purpoſe, that he might be an excellent Example to his own, and to all ſucceeding Ages, of all the

the Graces and Virtues, that are proper to almoſt every State and Condition of Life that Men can be in; And to this End, it was expedient that God ſhould expoſe him to divers Temptations, and put him upon almoſt every kind of Trial. In all which he acquitted himſelf bravely, like a Man, and like a Chriſtian.

For in his Proſperity, he was not high-minded; he did not truſt in uncertain Riches; he did not forget God; he did not deſpiſe the Poor; he was guilty of no Exceſs in the Uſe of ſenſual Pleaſures. So that in him, amidſt the Glories of a Crown, and the Splendor and Plenty of a Court, you might have ſeen all that Humility, that Temperance, that Chaſtity, that Contempt of the World, that Mortification and Self-denial, and that ſtrict and regular Piety and Devotion, which might be expected, but is not always found even in a Religious Cloyſter.

And yet in his Adverſity, when it pleaſed God to make Trial of him that Way, he was no leſs an eminent Example of all the Vertues and Graces that are proper to that State. Indeed had he been always bred up in the School of Adverſity, he could not have born his Afflictions better than he did; And this Conſideration adds very much to the Excellence of his Example; becauſe his Afflictions, as they were very grievous in themſelves, ſo they were alſo highly aggravated by their ſucceeding to a State of the greateſt Plenty and Proſperity. For 'tis no ſuch great Matter for a poor Man to be contented, if he was always poor, and was bred up hardly from the Beginning; Nor is it ſo much Commendation to a Man to bear any Affliction patiently, after he hath been

a long while uſed to it; But the greateſt Trial of a Man's Vertue, is in bearing well a great Change of his Condition for the worſe; And when from Plenty he is reduced to Want; from great Proſperity, to miſerable Adverſity; from the higheſt Honour, to the vileſt Diſgrace; if then he acquits himſelf well, and bears this great Change of his Fortune with Meekneſs and Equanimity, he becomes an excellent Pattern to the World, of the moſt difficult and heroick Vertues.

Such therefore was that Prince whoſe Memory we now celebrate; Who was exactly the ſame in all Conditions; and ſhewed himſelf even at the firſt Trial, a perfect Maſter of all thoſe Vertues which are ſuitable to an afflicted State, which others can ſcarcely learn after they have been long in it. Such was his Piety, that in every thing that happened to him, he meekly reſigned himſelf to the divine Will; and chearfully ſubmitted to whatever God was pleaſed to lay upon him, in a firm Belief that what God ordered was beſt. And ſuch was his Charity, that he freely forgave the rude Inſolencies and Affronts of his own Subjects; even of thoſe who had been, in a particular Manner, highly obliged by him; And he not only forgave them himſelf, but prayed earneſtly to God, to forgive them too.

And this humble and dutiful Behaviour towards God, under the ſevereſt Trials; And this charitable and Chriſtian Behaviour towards Men, under the greateſt Provocations to Anger and Revenge, fully juſtified his Integrity, and perfected his Example; ſo that now, from the various Accidents both of Proſperity and Adverſity which befell him, and his Behaviour

haviour under them, all Men, in all Eſtates, may be inſtructed in the Duties of their Condition; and, by the Pattern of ſuch a great King, and ſuch an excellent Man, may be incouraged to the Practice thereof. And if it had not happened to this Juſt Man according to the Work of the Wicked, we ſhould have wanted one of the moſt Excellent Examples of Piety and Vertue that ever the World produced.

And upon theſe Grounds, I ſuppoſe, it is, that the Church always celebrates the Memory of Martyrs with Joy and Gladneſs; nay, and keeps even the Days of their Martyrdom, as Feſtivals, not as Faſts; as Days of Rejoycing, not of Mourning; *viz.* partly, becauſe of the great Advantage which the Church reaps from the Inſtruction and Encouragement of their Example who have ſuffered for the Truth's ſake; And partly, becauſe thoſe Days on which they ſuffered the worſt of Deaths, were even to them themſelves, the beſt Days of their whole Life; the Days which did put a Period to all their Miſeries, and give them Admittance to everlaſting Joys. And therefore the ancient Church, called them not the Days of their Death or Martyrdom, but their Birth Days; becauſe they were then delivered out of an evil and troubleſom World, and born again unto a new and endleſs Life of unſpeakable Felicity; ſo that to them *the Day of their Death was*, in truth, *much better than the Day of their Birth.* Eccleſ. 7. 1.

And upon both theſe Accounts, we alſo might very well celebrate this Day of the Martyrdom of our late Pious and Gracious Soveraign K. CHARLES I.

as

as his Birth Day, and keep it as one of our higheſt Feſtivals; had he fallen, as the ancient Martyrs did, by the Hands of Infidels, or Strangers; or by any other Hands than our own. But this is our Unhappineſs, and indeed a moſt juſt Cauſe of the bittereſt Grief, and deepeſt Humiliation to us; that we can never think of his exemplary Piety and Goodneſs, without, at the ſame time reflecting upon our own great Wickedneſs; And that the more we admire his Vertues, the more we muſt condemn our Selves, through whoſe Iniquity it thus happened to him.

For tho' the Juſtice of God may be eaſily cleared and vindicated in ſuffering the beſt of Men, to be grievouſly afflicted, to be reviled and perſecuted, and even to be barbarouſly murthered, by the Hands of the Wicked; tho', I ſay, theſe Diſpenſations of Providence, ſo far as they are the Acts of Providence, are, both juſt in themſelves, and ordained to wiſe and good Ends; this will by no means ſerve to excuſe thoſe wicked Men, who are the Means and Inſtruments of the Afflictions of the Righteous; becauſe every Act is to be judged of by its ſelf, and not by the Effects which may follow from it, but are not the natural Conſequences thereof. And if *we may not do Evil, that Good may come; and our Damnation is juſt*, if we do that which is Evil, tho' we deſign Good by it; as the Apoſtle Teaches, *Rom.* 3. 8. much leſs may we allow our ſelves to do Evil, only becauſe God can bring Good out of it; and much more will our Damnation be juſt, if we do Evil with an evil Deſign, altho' God can turn our Injury into Good, to them to whom we meant it for Evil,

Evil, or may otherwiſe ſo order it, that it ſhall produce very beneficial Effects to Mankind.

For who can think that the Perſecutors of the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians were the leſs to blame, becauſe God, in his Wiſdom, ſo contrived it, that the Blood of the Martyrs became the Seed of the Church, and the moſt effectual means of Spreading Chriſtianity in the World? Or who will go about to excuſe from the greateſt ſin that ever was committed, the Betrayers and Murderers of our Lord, becauſe what they did, was what God himſelf had fore-ordained for the accompliſhing the Redemption of Mankind? Acts 2. 23. 4. 28.

And therefore, by the ſame Reaſon; Altho' the ſufferings of our late Martyred Soveraign did, without all Doubt, conduce much to his own ſpiritual Advantage, and to the increaſing the Glory of his Celeſtial Crown; And He, by his pious Deportment under them, became an excellent Example to all others who are, or ſhall be called to the like ſufferings; And while we conſider theſe Advantages thereof, both to him and us, we may juſtly commemorate the ſame with Joy and Thankfulneſs; and might reaſonably keep this, as we do the Days of other Saints with Feaſting and Rejoycing; yet when we conſider, on the other Hand, who were the Means and Inſtruments of his Afflictions; this opens quite another Scene, and brings a black Cloud upon this moſt glorious Day; and juſtifies the Wiſdom of that Authority which has commanded us to keep it in a quite different manner, even with Weeping, and with Faſting, and with Mourning; becauſe there is no Way to expiate a National Guilt,

but

but by a National Repentance; For tho' it may charitably be believed, nay tho' it be certainly true, that there was not an actual conſent of all the People (perhaps not of an Hundredth Part of the People) even of that Generation, to this Act of great Wickedneſs and horrid Barbarity, *by which the Proteſtant Religion hath received the greateſt Wound and Reproach, and the People of* England *the moſt unſupportable Shame and Infamy*; yet when 'tis conſider'd, that it was done by thoſe, who had then, by the Help and Aſſiſtance of better meaning Men, attained to an uncontroulable Power; and that it was done *under the Name and Authority of a Parliament*; (tho' the Party which called themſelves ſo, and which paſſed the *Ordinance for erecting that prodigious and unheard of Tribunal, which they called* An High Court of Juſtice *for Tryal of his Majeſty were not a tenth Part of the whole*) And when 'tis further conſidered, that a great many of thoſe, who did not give an actual conſent thereto by their Voices, gave too great a conſent thereto by their Silence, and by their not endeavouring in time to hinder it; The whole Nation, I fear, can hardly be thought guiltleſs.

* *Stat.* 12. Car. 2. c. 30.

Nay, and even we alſo who live now, ſo many Years after the Act is done, may yet be juſtly thought to give too great a conſent to it; and to be, in ſome ſort, Partakers with our Fathers, in the Guilt of ſhedding this righteous Blood; if we can ſpeak of this villainous Act, or of the Preparations to it, without Abhorrence; Nay more, If we do not heartily grieve and mourn at the Remembrance thereof; for if you look into *Ezek.* 9. 4, 5, 6. you will ſee that even in the Judgment of God himſelf; they

they which do not mourn for the ſins of others, and eſpecially for the publick Abominations that are done in the midſt of the City or Nation to which they belong, are Partakers therein.

And beſides, It may be alſo conſidered; That tho' we, who live now, were not any of us of the number of thoſe that were actually concerned in this villainous Act, of murthering the Lord's Anointed; being perhaps not then Born, or not of competent Age to be concerned in ſuch Matters; yet 'tis an uſual thing with God, (and what he has expreſly threatned) to *viſit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children, and upon the Childrens Children, unto the third, and to the fourth Generation.* And if he ſometimes does this, for private and perſonal ſins; much more, may we reaſonably think, he often does the ſame, for ſuch ſins as are publick and national; becauſe tho' one Generation paſſes away, and another comes, the Nation never dies, the Nation is ſtill the ſame in this Age, that it was in the laſt, and will be the ſame in the next. Exod. 34. 7.

And this Threatning of God, I think, has been, in ſome meaſure, verified upon us. For we have already felt many ſtroaks of the divine Vengeance, as we have great Reaſon to believe, upon this very Account. 'Tis reaſonable, I ſay, to think this, becauſe ſome of the Judgments which have befallen us ſince, have been the natural Effects and Products of this Days Wickedneſs; for ſuch, I think we muſt all allow to be, thoſe many Years of Anarchy and Confuſion which immediately ſucceeded this bloody Tragedy; and alſo (to name no more) thoſe diſmal Fears and Apprehenſions that we have ſince been in of Popery

and Arbitrary Power; occaſioned, in great meaſure, by the Expulſion of the Royal Seed and Education in a Foreign Country and Religion.

That theſe will be the laſt Expreſſions of God's Anger againſt us for this great ſin, we hope; but at the ſame time, we have much greater Reaſon to fear they will not, ſo long as all the ſame Wickedneſſes do abound which have drawn down thoſe many heavy Judgments of God upon us which we have already felt; And we can have no reaſonable Aſſurance that we ſhall not be puniſhed yet ſeven times more for our Iniquities, unleſs now by a ſincere Repentance, and a thorough Reformation of our Lives, and an unfeigned Humiliation of our Souls, and an utter Deteſtation of all ſuch villainous Practices for the future, we endeavour to appeaſe the Anger of God, and to move him to Compaſſion towards us.

This then let us do; and then let us Pray, as we are taught in our Litany, (and we may reaſonably hope God will hear our Prayer) *Remember not, Lord, our Offences, nor the Offences of our Fore-Fathers; Neither take thou Vengeance of our Sins; Spare us, good Lord, ſpare thy People, whom thou haſt redeemed with thy precious Blood; and be not angry with us for ever.* Amen.

FINIS.

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